

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 017

S E C R E T BUDAPEST 4161

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PGEN HU US VT

SUBJECT: CROWN OF ST STEPHEN - CARDINAL LEKAI'S VIEWS

1. IN A MOVING MEETING YESTERDAY AFTERNOON, CARDINAL LEKAI LEFT NO DOUBT OF HIS FULL-HEARTED SUPPORT FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION TO RETURN THE CROWN. HE SPOKE WITH DEEP FEELING WHEN HE SAID THIS WAS A HISTORIC ACT, THE MOST IMPORTANT THAT COULD BE TAKEN AFFECTING HUNGARIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS. THE CROWN IS A RELIGIOUS AS WELL AS AN HISTORICAL SYMBOL. IT STANDS FOR THE COUNTRY'S INDEPENDENCE AND FREEDOM AND HE, THE CARDINAL, WAS OVERCOME WITH JOY AT THE PROSPECT OF ITS RETURN.

2. THE CARDINAL NOT ONLY ASSURED ME THAT HE WOULD BE AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN THE HUNGARIAN DELEGATION, HE ALSO SAID THAT IF I LOOKED AT HIM WHEN THE TWO WERE AT THE AIRPORT, I WILL SEE TEARS RUNNING DOWN HIS CHEEKS.

3. LEKAI TRACED THE HISTORY OF THE CROWN, FROM ITS BEGINNING WHEN IT WAS GIVEN TO ST STEPHEN BY POPE SYLVESTER, THROUGH THE EARLY CENTURES WHEN IT WAS GUARDED BY THE BISHOPS AT SZEKESFEHERVAR, THROUGH ITS ROLE IN THE

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REVOLUTION OF 1848, AND FINALLY TO ITS REMOVAL FROM BUDAPEST AT THE CLOSE OF WORLD WAR II TO KEEP IT OUT OF THE HANDS OF THE RUSSIANS. HE THEN SAID THAT HE WANTED ME TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE CHURCH WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO ACT AS GUARDIAN OF THE CROWN. THE CROWN HAS TO BE GUARDED DAY AND NIGHT BY SOLDIERS AND THE CHURCH HAS NEITHER SOLDIERS NOR A

SUFFICIENTLY SECURE PLACE TO STORE THE CROWN. ONLY THE STATE HAS THE NECESSARY RESOURCES. THE AMERICAN STIPULATION THAT THE CROWN BE PLACED ON PERMANENT PUBLIC DISPLAY WILL CAUSE THE STATE MANY PROBLEMS SINCE SECURITY FOR THE CROWN MUST BE COMPLETE. IF THE CHURCH WERE THE CUSTODIAN OF THE CROWN, AND THE CROWN WERE STOLEN, THE CHURCH WOULD BE IN AN UNTENABLE POSITION.

4. CARDINAL LEKAI SAID THAT HE WOULD BE PLEASED TO MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT OR WRITE AN ARTICLE IN THE HUNGARIAN CATHOLIC PRESS CONCERNING HIS SUPPORT FOR THE RETURN OF THE CROWN. HE ASKED ME AT THIS TIME TO REPORT TO WASHINGTON:

"I SUPPORT THE RETURN OF THE CROWN, THE CATHOLIC CHURCH SUPPORTS THE RETURN OF THE CROWN, AND THE HUNGARIAN PEOPLE SUPPORT THE RETURN OF THE CROWN."

5. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, LEKAI SAID THAT THE VATICAN HAS COMMUNICATED WITH HIM ON THE SUBJECT OF THE CROWN. THE VATICAN TOLD LEKAI THAT IT WAS INDIFFERENT AND NEUTRAL (INDIFFERENS ES SEMLEGES); IT REGARDS THIS MATTER AS ONE BETWEEN HUNGARY AND THE UNITED STATES. THE CARDINAL THOUGHT THIS WAS THE CORRECT ATTITUDE.

6. THE CARDINAL'S PRIVATE SECRETARY, MIKLOS HORVATH,
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TOLD US THAT HE WOULD LET US KNOW WHEN THE CARDINAL MADE HIS STATEMENT, ORAL OR WRITTEN.

7. DEPARTMENT PLEASE REPEAT TO ROME.
KAISER

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT SENT ROME.

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NNN

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